ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

DOI-BLM-CO-040-2015-0009 EA

Trail Reroute - Rio Grande Trail Connection

Prepared by:

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BLM

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LOCATION. The Crown (east of Carbondale, Colorado)

LEGAL DESCRIPTIONS. T8S, R87W, Section 4, see attached map (Figure 1) in description of Proposed Action below

APPLICANT. None, BLM initiated.

BACKGROUND. The non-motorized Rio Grande opened in fall 2006 and connects Carbondale with points up valley. This trail has since received heavy bicycle and pedestrian use. The Rio Grande trail crosses BLM public lands on the north side of The Crown, and affords some of the only public access in that area.

Recreationists soon discovered that access and began using the existing routes associated with rights of ways on The Crown. The existing route crosses steep, dry terrain, and has resulted in the creation of unsustainable trails. The existing average gradient of the trail is over 20%. Recreationists have also been using an existing steep, unsustainable route immediately to the northwest that crosses private property.

In addition, there is a strong demand for beginner/intermediate mountain bike trails in the Roaring Fork Valley. Most existing trails are steep and technical, and suitable for advanced riders or intermediates willing to devote a lot of time to the sport. The Grande Crown trail would provide opportunities for beginners and casual riders who are not interested in learning the technical skills needed to negotiate most other trails in the valley.

The Crown is designated as a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) with targeted activities of mountain biking with off highway vehicle (OHV) use still occurring on certain designated routes. In the proposed SRMA, the desired physical Recreation Setting Characteristic (RSC) would be rural and middle country, the desired social RSC would be middle country, and the desired operational RSC would be rural and middle country in project area. In addition, a best management practice to reroute trails that create resource damage and trespass on private property is included in the recreation appendix. In the Crown area, motorized and mechanized travel will be limited to designated routes. A seasonal closure to motorized and mechanized modes of travel will be in place from December 1 through April 15.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION. There is a need to reroute portions of the non-motorized Rio Grande Connection trail to a legal and sustainable alignment and rehabilitate portions of the existing alignment. See figure 1.

SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ISSUES. BLM national register for land use planning and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents lists NEPA documents that have been initiated. This register allows the public to review and comment on BLM CRVFO NEPA and planning projects. The public scoping period was open for 30 days ending on March 6, 2015. No public comments were received.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION. The Proposed Action is to reroute a trail that has steep, eroding and unsustainable reaches and trespasses on private property. Approximately 1.3 miles of new trail would be constructed and maintained (see Figure 2). In addition, 3/4 miles of existing trail would be closed to public mechanized and motorized travel, but still available for administrative use for a right of way holder. The existing route would be partially reclaimed through the use of waterbars and check dams created with native materials. The native materials used for check dams will consist of soil, rocks, debris and woody vegetation found on-site. The check dams would block the sightline to the old trail, preventing continued use of the route by the public.

The proposed route would be non-motorized with a tread width of 18"-36" and a clearance corridor of 5' wide by 8' high. Native materials in the trail corridor will be used for route construction and will incorporate switchbacks, berms, water bars, armoring, and other standard trail-design practices so that erosion and maintenance needs are minimized. Design principles will also include:

- The average trail grade will be 10% or less.
- Grade reversals and appropriately spaced water bars will be used to minimize soil loss and erosion.
- A 5% outslope will be used to prevent water from running down the trail.

The centerline of the new trail is flagged. The trail would be constructed in late summer and fall of 2015 by RMYC and/or Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers (RFOV) and\or Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association (RFMBA) volunteers and\or a contractor hired by a trail building company using a mini excavator and hand tools such as pulaskis, shovels, rock bars, and loppers. All construction would be supervised by BLM rec staff. All tools and equipment used for trail construction would be cleaned to prevent the introduction of weeds. Long-term maintenance will be performed with the help of partners (including RFOV and RFMBA).

Trail users will be informed of the reroute through press releases and signage.

Figure 1. The Crown SRMA and Project Location.

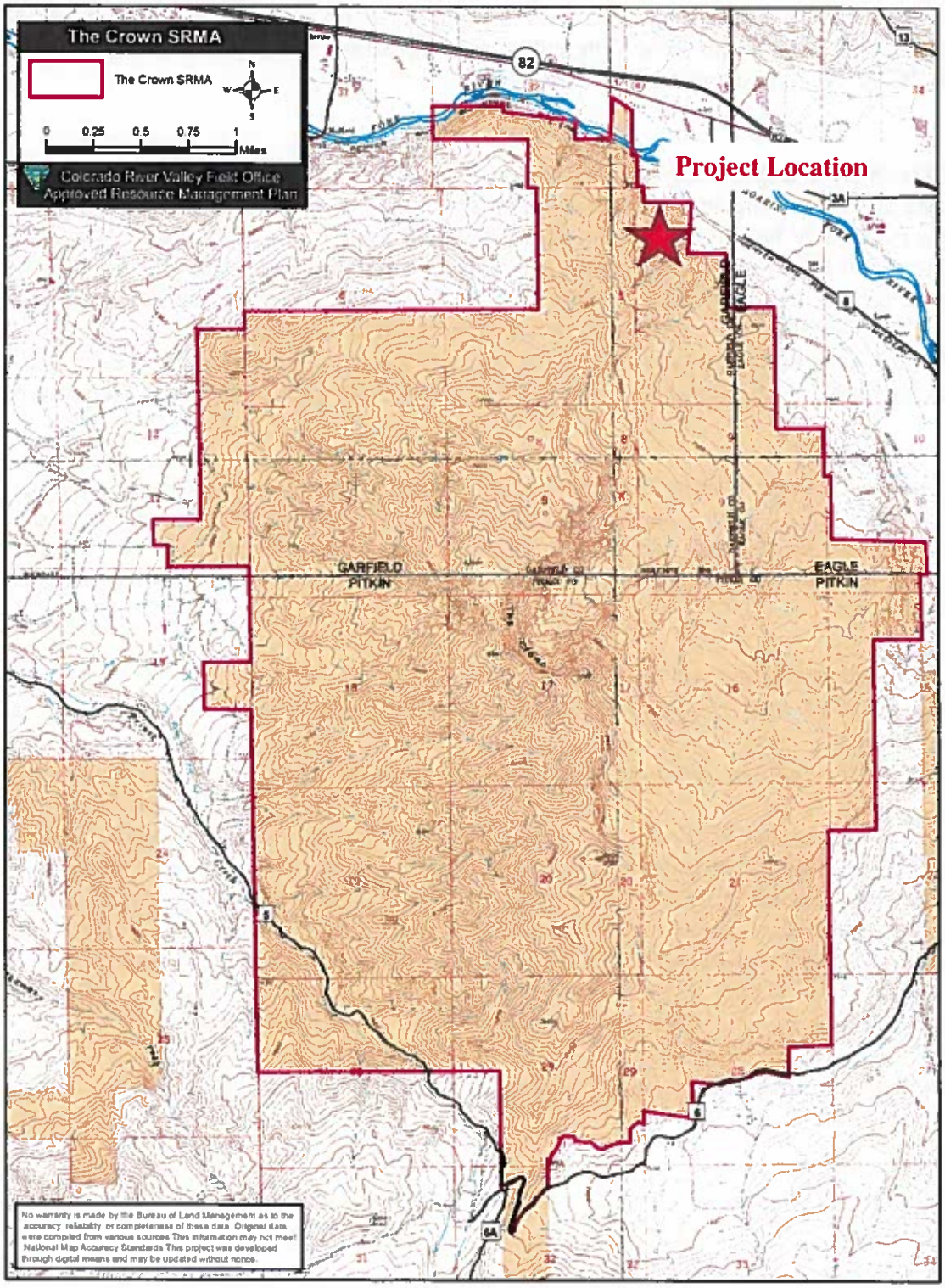
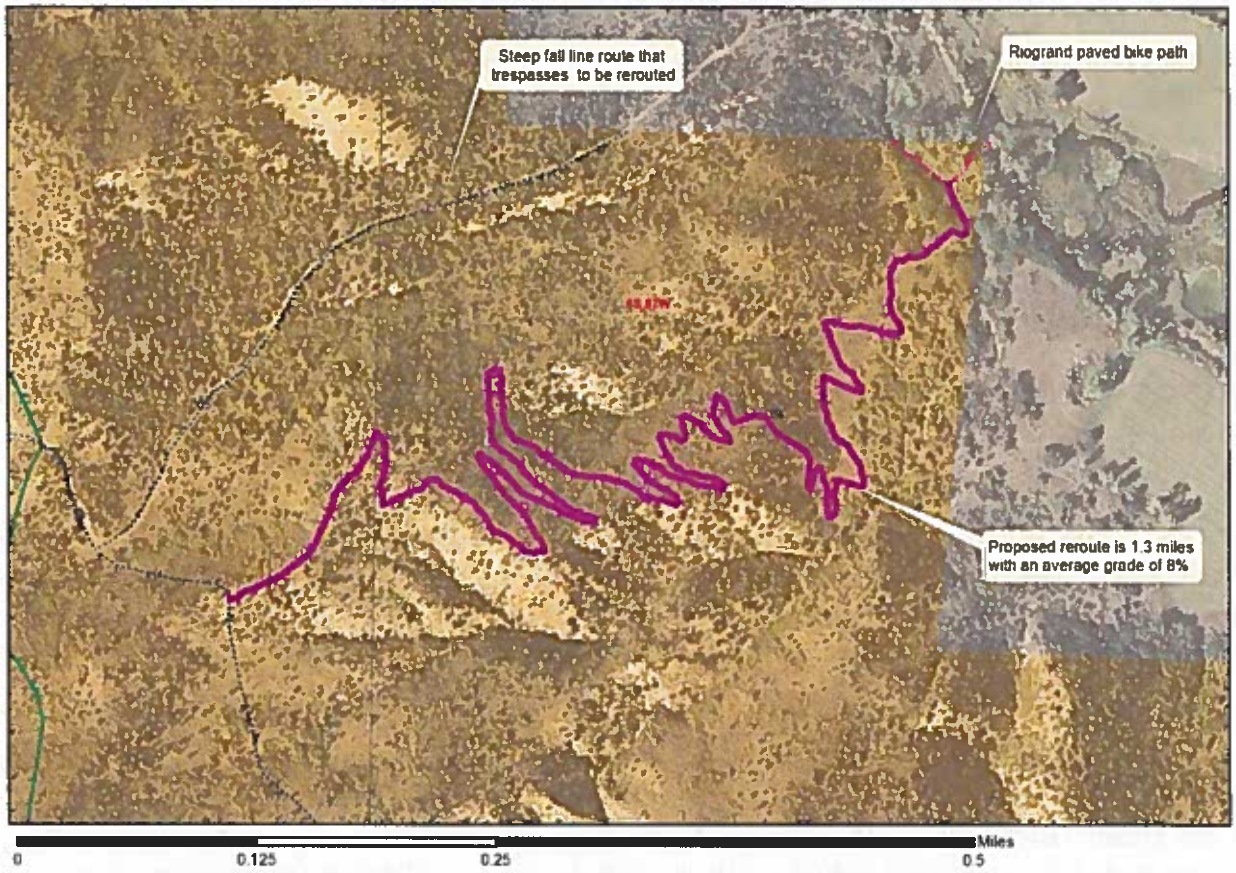


Figure 2. Map of Proposed Reroute.



DESCRIPTION OF NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE. Do not construct a reroute of the designated trail. The existing trail would continue to be used. The existing erosion and trespassing caused by the trail would continue.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW. The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3).

Name of Plan. Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO) Record of Decision (ROD) and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP).

Date Approved. June 2015.

Decision Number/Page. Decision Number REC-MA-01. Recreation and visitor services decisions beginning on page 69 including supporting information found in Appendix F -

Recreation and Visitor Services Management Framework for Special and Extensive Recreation Management Areas and Appendix G - Travel Management.

Decision Language. Designate five special recreation management areas (SRMA) (62,800 acres):

- **REC-MA-01a.** Hardscrabble-East Eagle SRMA (21,900 acres)
- **REC-MA-01b.** King Mountain SRMA (13,000 acres)
- **REC-MA-01c.** Red Hill SRMA (3,100 acres)
- **REC-MA-01d.** The Crown SRMA (9,100 acres)
- **REC-MA-01e.** Upper Colorado River SRMA (15,700 acres).

RELATIONSHIP TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS, OTHER PLANS. The Proposed Action would not preclude any actions proposed in the nearly completed CRVFO revised RMP.

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH. In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. The five standards pertain to the ecological health of: upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands.

A formal Land Health Assessment was conducted in the Roaring Fork Watershed in 2010 which included the Crown area. The area was determined to be Meeting all the Standards for Public Land Health (BLM 2011). The impact analysis addresses whether the Proposed Action and any alternatives being analyzed would result in impacts that would maintain, improve, or cause a deterioration in land health conditions for each of the five standards. These analyses are located in the program-specific analysis in this document.

DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS, MITIGATION MEASURES. This section provides a description of the human and natural environmental resources that could be affected by the Proposed Action and alternatives. In addition, the section presents comparative analyses of the direct and indirect effects on the affected environment stemming from the implementation of the various actions.

A variety of laws, regulations, and policy directives mandate the evaluation of the effects of a Proposed Action and alternatives on certain environmental elements. Not all programs, resources or uses are present in the area, or if they are present, may not be affected by the Proposed Action and alternatives (Table 3-1). Only those elements that are present and potentially affected are described and brought forth for detailed analysis.

Table 1. Programs, Resources, and Uses (Including Supplemental Authorities).

Programs, Resources, and Uses (Including Supplemental Authorities)	Analyzed for Potential Affects	
	Yes	No
Access and Transportation	X	
Air Quality		X
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern		X
Cadastral Survey		X
Cultural Resources	X	
Native American Religious Concerns	X	
Environmental Justice		X
Farmlands, Prime or Unique		X
Fire/Fuels Management		X
Floodplains		X
Forests		X
Geology and Minerals		X
Livestock Grazing Management		X
Noise		X
Paleontology		X
Plants: Invasive, Non-native Species (Noxious Weeds)	X	
Plants: Sensitive, Threatened, or Endangered	X	
Plants: Vegetation	X	
Realty Authorizations		X
Recreation	X	
Social and/or Economics		X
Soils	X	
Visual Resources		X
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid		X
Water Quality, Surface and Ground	X	
Water Rights		X
Wetlands and Riparian Zones		X
Wild and Scenic Rivers		X
Wilderness/WSAs/Wilderness Characteristics		X
Wildlife: Aquatic / Fisheries	X	
Wildlife: Migratory Birds	X	
Wildlife: Sensitive, Threatened, and Endangered Species	X	
Wildlife: Terrestrial	X	

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

Travel in the Crown SRMA is limited to designated routes. The area is closed to motorized and mechanized use from December 1 until April 15 to protect winter big game habitat. Current recreation use within the project area is mostly limited to non-motorized travel because the adjacent Rio Grande trail is non-motorized.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

Proposed Action. The Crown SRMA is a "close to home" recreation area for residents of the Roaring Fork Valley. The Crown SRMA allows frequent/easy access to non-motorized outdoor activities, with mountain biking being the most popular. Mountain biking on single-track trails would be enhanced by rerouting the fall line trail.

No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, the trail would not be rerouted. The existing trail alignment would continue to be used resulting in continued trespassing and soil erosion.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

A records search within one mile of the general project area and a Class III inventory of the Area of Potential Effect (APE) were completed by a Colorado BLM permitted cultural resource contracting firm (OAHP# MC.CH.R94, GF.AE.R3; CRVFO CRIR# 162, 169, 591, 735, 1013, 1111, 15404-3, 15809-3). Nineteen previously documented cultural resources have been located within one mile of the APE. There are a total of five eligible sites, two potentially eligible sites (need data), and twelve not eligible sites for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Of the five eligible sites, four sites are segments of historic railroads (5EA.1661, 5EA.1663, 5EA.198, 5EA.198.38) and one is a historic homestead (5GF.20). The two potentially eligible sites (needs data) are a historic ditch (5EA.2753.1) and a prehistoric open lithic site (5GF.532). Finally, the twelve not eligible sites consist of one historic trail (5EA.2198.1), one historic railroad (5GF.3016), two historic ditches (5GF.4557.1 and 5GF.4558.1), one historic school (5GF.389), two prehistoric sites (5EA.487 and 5GF.531), and four prehistoric isolated finds (5EA.2197, 5GF.568, 5GF.581, 5GF.582). Vegetation within the project area consists of patches of thick oakbrush and sage brush. The project inventory and evaluation is in compliance with the NHPA, the Colorado State Protocol Agreement, and other federal law, regulation, policy, and guidelines regarding cultural resources.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

Proposed Action. The proposed route will connect onto the old Rio Grande Railroad (5GF.1661) bed which is eligible for the NRHP. The bed is the only part of the railroad that is still intact and, although it has been paved, it still retains integrity of place. Rerouting the trail will have no adverse effect to the historic railroad because there will be minimal ground disturbance within the site boundary and it will occur within previously disturbed areas. Rerouting the trail may actually be beneficial to unknown cultural resources in the general area because it will be more sustainable than the current route and will help ensure erosion is limited. No additional historic properties were identified during project specific inventory and a determination of "No Historic Properties Affected" was made in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NRHP), as amended (16 USC 470f), National BLM/SHPO Programmatic Agreement (1997), and Colorado Protocol (1998) for the proposed trail route.

There would be no direct impacts to cultural resources from the implementation of the Proposed Action. However, indirect long-term cumulative impacts from increased access and potential erosion could result in a range of impacts to known and undiscovered cultural resources in the vicinity of the location. These impacts could range from exposure of previously buried remains to illegal collection, excavation, and vandalism. Compliance with the Education/Discovery stipulation and hydrologic Best Management Practices should help in alleviating these impacts somewhat.

Mitigation.

Even though the project area was surveyed, ground disturbing activities have the potential to impact undiscovered, buried cultural resources through direct soil disturbance by machinery or indirect soil disturbance through vegetation removal and livestock tramping and concentrating. In order to protect cultural resources uncovered during operations the following conditions of approval are proposed as mitigation.

Cultural Resources. If subsurface cultural values are uncovered during operations, all work in the vicinity of the resource will cease and the authorized officer with the BLM notified immediately. The operator shall take any additional measures requested by the BLM to protect discoveries until they can be adequately evaluated by the permitted archaeologist. Within 48 hours of the discovery, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and consulting parties will be notified of the discovery and consultation will begin to determine an appropriate mitigation measure. BLM in cooperation with the operator will ensure that the discovery is protected from further disturbance until mitigation is completed. Operations may resume at the discovery site upon receipt of written instructions and authorization by the authorized officer.

Native American Human Remains. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the holder must notify the authorized officer, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural

patrimony on federal land. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (c) and (d), the holder must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery that could adversely affect the discovery. The holder shall make a reasonable effort to protect the human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony for a period of thirty days after written notice is provided to the authorized officer, or until the authorized officer has issued a written notice to proceed, whichever occurs first.

No Action Alternative. Under this alternative the route would not be constructed. However, the public would likely continue to create and use a trail that might result in additional erosional disturbance which could expose previously buried remains. The potential for illegal collection, vandalism and or excavation would remain.

NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

American Indian religious concerns are legislatively considered under several acts and Executive Orders, namely the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (PL 95-341), the Native American Graves Environmental Assessment Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (PL 101-601), and Executive Order 13007 (1996; Indian Sacred Sites). In summary, these require, in concert with other provisions such as those found in the NHPA and ARPA, that the federal government carefully and proactively take into consideration traditional and religious Native American culture and life and ensure, to the degree possible, that access to sacred sites, the treatment of human remains, the possession of sacred items, the conduct of traditional religious practices, and the preservation of important cultural properties are considered and not unduly infringed upon. In some cases, these concerns are directly related to "historic properties" and "archaeological resources". In some areas elements of the landscape without archaeological or other human material remains may be involved. Identification of these concerns is normally completed during the land use planning efforts, reference to existing studies, or via direct consultation.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

Proposed Action. The Ute have a generalized concept of spiritual significance that is not easily transferred to Euro-American models or definitions. As such the BLM recognizes that the Ute have identified sites that are of concern because of their association with Ute occupation of the area as part of their traditional lands. No traditional cultural properties, unique natural resources, or properties of a type previously identified as being of interest to local tribes, were identified during the cultural resources inventory of the project area. Although there would be no direct impacts from the Proposed Action, indirect impacts from increased access and public use in the vicinity of the proposed project could result in impacts to unknown Native American resources ranging from illegal collection to vandalism. Compliance with the Education/Discovery

stipulation should help in alleviating these impacts somewhat. No additional Native American Indian consultation was conducted for the proposed project.

No Action Alternative. Under this alternative the route would not be constructed. However, the public would likely continue to create trails that might result in additional erosion which could expose previously buried remains. The potential for illegal collection, vandalism and or excavation would remain the same as if the trail is constructed.

PLANTS: INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES (NOXIOUS WEEDS)

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

A landscape-wide weed inventory has not been completed on the Rio Grande Trail connection. However, monitoring and other inventories have shown that several species of noxious weeds and invasive non-native species occur adjacent to the area of the Proposed Action and are listed on Table 1.

Table 2. Noxious Weeds Infestation Known to Occur in Area of the Proposed Action.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Statewide List Type
Acroptilon repens	Russian knapweed	B List
Linaria vulgaris	Yellow toadflax	B List
Carduus nutans	Musk thistle	B List
Cirsium arvense	Canada thistle	B List
Cynoglossum officinale L.	Houndstongue	B List
Carduus acanthoides L.	Plumeless thistle	B List
Cirsium vulgare	Bull thistle	B List
Verbascum Thapsus L.	Common mullein	C List
Arctium minus Bernh.	Common burdock	C List

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

Proposed Action. Weeds generally germinate and become established in areas of surface disturbing activities. The Proposed Action involves constructing a new 1.3 miles stretch of trail could provide a niche for weed establishment. The existing route in the Proposed Action would be partially reclaimed through the use of waterbars and check dams created with native materials which would reduce areas of disturbance. Trail construction can contribute to the establishment and expansion of noxious weeds by creating areas of disturbance and through seed transport.

> ***Mitigation.*** The trail will be monitored for noxious weeds. If monitoring indicates weeds are present, then spraying and reseeding with a native seed mix will be used to treat weed infestations.

No Action Alternative. The existing fall line with steep, eroding and unsustainable reaches would continue to receive use and be a conduit for the spread of weeds.

PLANTS: SENSITIVE, THREATENED, AND ENDANGERED

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

The project area lies within the southeast corner of Garfield County, Colorado. Four federally listed plant species may occur within or be impacted by actions occurring in Garfield County. In addition, there are five BLM sensitive plant species with habitat and/or occurrence records in Garfield County. Table 3 lists these species along with summaries of their habitat requirements, and potential to occur within the project area based on known geographic range and habitats present.

Table 3 includes the list from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS 2015) for Federally listed, proposed, or candidate plant species and the Colorado BLM State Director's Sensitive Species List (BLM 2009) for sensitive plant species that may occur within the project area and be impacted by the Proposed Action. The table also summarizes their habitat descriptions and potential for occurrence in the Proposed Action area based on known geographic range and habitats present.

Table 3. Special Status Plant Species in Garfield County.

Federally Listed, Proposed or Candidate Plant Species		
Species	**Habitat**	**Potential for Occurrence**
Colorado hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus glaucus*) - Threatened	Rocky hills, mesa slopes, and alluvial benches in salt desert shrub communities (shadscale, greasewood, and sagebrush). Often with well-formed microbiotic crusts; 4,500 to 6000 feet	**No:** The project area is above the upper elevational range and does not support salt desert shrub communities.
DeBeque phacelia (*Phacelia submutica*) - Threatened	Sparsely vegetated, steep slopes in chocolate-brown, gray, or red clay on Atwell Gulch and Shire Members, Wasatch Formation; 4,700 to 6,200 feet	**No:** Project area is above the elevational range for this species and no exposures of the Wasatch Formation are found there.
Parachute penstemon (*Penstemon debilis*) - Threatened	Sparsely vegetated, south-facing, steep, white shale talus of the Parachute Creek Member of the Green River Formation; 8,000 to 9,000 feet	**No:** There are no exposures of the Green River Formation in the project area.
Ute ladies'-tresses orchid (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) - Threatened	Found in seasonally flooded or subirrigated alluvial soils along streams, lakes or in wetland areas; 4,500 to 7,000 feet.	**No:** There are no seasonally flooded or subirrigated alluvial soils within or adjacent to the project area.
BLM Sensitive Plant Species		
Species	**Habitat**	**Potential for Occurrence**
Cathedral Bluffs meadowrue (*Thalictrum heliophilum*)	Endemic on sparsely vegetated, steep shale talus slopes of the Green River Formation; 6,300-8,800 feet	**No:** There are no exposures of the Green River Formation in the project area.

DeBeque milkvetch (*Astragalus debequaeus*)	Varicolored, fine-textured, seleniferous or saline soils of Wasatch Formation. In pinyohn-juniper woodlands or salt desert shrublands; 5,100 to 6,400 feet	**No:** Project area is above the elevational range for this species and no exposures of the Wasatch Formation are found there.
Harrington's penstemon (*Penstemon harringtonii*)	Wyoming or mountain big sagebrush or mixed mountain shrub communities on rocky loam or rocky clay loam soils between the elevations of 6,200 to 10,000 feet. Soils usually derived from coarse basaltic or calcareous parent material.	**Yes:** Multiple populations are known to exist adjacent to the project area.
Naturita milkvetch (*Astragalus naturitensis*)	Sandstone mesas, ledges, crevices and slopes in pinyon/juniper woodlands; 5,000 to 7,000 feet	**No:** No sandstone outcrops are found in the project area.
Piceance bladderpod (*Lesquerella parviflora*)	Shale outcrops of the Green River Formation, on ledges and slopes of canyons in open areas; 6,200 to 8,600 feet	**No:** There are no exposures of the Green River Formation in the project area.
Roan Cliffs blazing-star (*Mentzelia rhizomata*)	Sandstone mesas, ledges, crevices and slopes in pinyon/juniper woodlands; 5,000 to 7,000 feet	**No:** There are no exposures of the Green River Formation in the project area.

The BLM sensitive plant, Harrington's penstemon (*Penstemon harringtonii*), has been documented in sagebrush communities within 0.25 miles of the Proposed Action area. The soils in the project area are mapped as a calcareous Grotte gravelly loam which may be considered potential habitat. A botanical survey of the trail alignment was conducted on May 14, 2015. No penstemon plants were observed within the sagebrush/mesic mountain shrub habitat along the lower and middle portions of the proposed trail alignment. However, numerous penstemon rosettes were observed along the ridgetops where the proposed trail crosses into pinyon-juniper woodlands and in more barren, rocky areas. Many of the penstemon plants were not yet in flower, but all of those that were flowering were identified as Osterhoutt's penstemon (*Penstemon osterhouttii*) a more common relative of Harrington's penstemon.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

Proposed Action. Due to the absence of any known occurrences or potential habitat for the four Federally listed plant species within the project area, the Proposed Action would have "No Effect" on listed plant populations or their habitat.

Although not all of the penstemon plants within the project area were in bloom and therefore could not be positively identified, the pinyon-juniper habitat where the rosettes were located is most often considered habitat for Osterhoutt's penstemon rather than Harrington's penstemon and all the penstemon plants in bloom were identified as Osterhoutt's penstemon. Thus, it is highly unlikely that the Proposed Action would have any impact on Harrington's penstemon populations. The project area does not provide potential habitat for any other BLM sensitive plants and would have no impact on these BLM sensitive species.

No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, the trail would not be re-routed. Neither the existing fall-line trail nor the proposed new alignment occurs in occupied or potential habitat for special status plant species. The No Action Alternative would have no impact on special status plants.

LAND HEALTH STANDARD 4 FOR SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED, AND ENDANGERED PLANTS.

The project area lies within the Crown Common allotment in the Roaring Fork Land Health Assessment unit. Based on the Land Health Assessment, BLM staff concluded that the project area was achieving Standard 4 for special status, threatened, and endangered plants (BLM 2011). Harrington's penstemon is known to occur immediately adjacent to the project area but was not located within or downslope of the area of proposed disturbance. The Proposed Action should not have any effect on conditions for special status plants and Land Health Standard 4 would continue to be achieved.

PLANTS: VEGETATION

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

The project area is located on steep slopes on the northeast side of the Crown east of the Town of Carbondale. The proposed trail alignment begins in a relatively flat alluvial plain comprised of dense basin big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *tridentata*) with an associated herbaceous community dominated by western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*), prairie junegrass (*Koeleria macrantha*), and several species of bluegrass (*Poa* asp.). The trail then begins to ascend through a swale dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *wyomingensis*) and mesic mountain shrubs such as antelope bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*) and common snowberry (*Symphoricarpos rotundifolia*). The understory supports species such as bottlebrush squirreltail (*Elymus elymoides*), arrowleaf balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*), cinquefoil, (*Potentilla* sp.), elk sedge (*Carex geyeri*), and brittle pricklypear (*Opuntia fragilis*). The trail finally reaches the ridgeline which is dominated by pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*), Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*) and mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus*) with sparse grasses and forbs, but a variety of microbiotic crusts.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

Proposed Action. The Proposed Action is to construct 1.3 miles of new single-track trail with an 18-36" tread width. The Proposed Action would involve clearing soil crusts on the 18-36" tread width and vegetation in a corridor approximately 6 feet wide. This would result in the loss of approximately one acre of vegetation as well as soil crusts on the trail tread itself. The use of water bars and check dams on the existing trail may help decrease the extent of ruts within the trail. Given the relative abundance of the sagebrush and pinyon-juniper vegetation types in the local watershed, the proposed action would have minor to negligible impacts on the availability and condition of these vegetation types.

No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, the trail would not be re-routed. No new trail construction would occur and there would be no loss of vegetation in the project area.

LAND HEALTH STANDARD 3 FOR HEALTHY PLANT COMMUNITIES.

The Proposed Action is located within the Crown Common Allotment in the Roaring Fork Land Health Assessment area (BLM 2011). During the assessment, BLM staff concluded that the Crown Common Allotment was achieving Standard 3 for plant communities, but with a few concerns pertaining to vegetation condition including hedged and decadent sagebrush with some P/J encroachment, and noxious weeds invading in disturbed areas. The Proposed Action would have no impact on decadent sagebrush or P/J encroachment but the new surface disturbance may increase the risk of noxious weeds becoming established in the project area. Implementation of the mitigation proposed in the Invasive, Non-native Species section would help prevent noxious weed establishment. Land Health Standard 3 should continue to be achieved under the Proposed Action.

RECREATION

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

Recreation Objectives. BLM lands on The Crown are designated as a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). Within BLM, SRMAs are managed under a framework that focuses on the positive outcomes (experiences and benefits) of engaging in recreational activities. The recreation objectives are established in the CRVFO ROD and Approved RMP (BLM 2015), specifies to manage The Crown SRMA for a specific set of activities, experiences and benefits. The targeted activity is mountain biking (with off-highway vehicle (OHV) use still occurring on certain designated routes). Experiences include: 1) Enjoying frequent access to outdoor physical activity, 2) Getting some needed physical exercise, 3) Developing your skills and abilities, 4) For the challenge or sport and 5) Enjoying the areas wildlife, scenery, views and aesthetics. Benefits include: 1) Improved physical fitness/ better health maintenance, 2) Living a more outdoor-oriented lifestyle and 3) Increased desirability as a place to live or retire.

Recreation Setting Characteristics (RSCs). RSCs are a description of the physical, social and operational characteristics that define an SRMA's qualities and condition. Recreation settings are described based on a spectrum of possible recreation settings ranging from a primitive classification to an urban classification. Three recreation setting components and their RSCs are considered under the classifications: a) the physical qualities of nature and the landscape defined by remoteness, naturalness and facilities; b) the social qualities associated with use defined by group size, contacts and evidence of use; and c) the operational conditions to manage recreation use defined by type of access, visitor services and management controls. Monitoring and evaluation may cause recreation managers to adjust the RSCs over the life of the plan to meet recreation objectives (BLM 2014).

Appendix F of the CRVFO Approved ROD and RMP Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (BLM 2015) identified the desired RSCs for The Crown SRMA. These are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Desired Recreation Setting Characteristics.

Physical RSCs	Description
Remoteness	The SRMA is made slightly more remote by reducing unnecessary motorized vehicle routes however most roads remain for administrative use. Increase miles mechanized routes throughout the SRMA.
Naturalness	The existing , but varied, level of naturalness is maintained. Any new non-recreational land uses have a low level of contrast with the landscape and are not visually obvious from recreation facilities and trails.
Visitor Facilities	Single-track trail system is expanded, maintained, re-routed and signed. Basic recreation facilities and visitor amenities occur at trailheads.
Social RSCs	**Description**
Contacts	Participants encounter a primary use season (Mid-April through October) average of up to 15 encounters/day in areas classified as back country and an average of up to 29 encounters/day within areas classified as middle country.
Group Size	Participants encounter a primary use season (Mid-April through October) average of up to 6 people per group away from trailheads
Evidence of Use	Localized areas of vegetation alteration and wear are found near along trails, at trailheads and at campsites. Evidence of others decrease away from motorized routes and access points. Inappropriate recreation use is rehabilitated.
Operational RSCs	**Description**
Public Access	Mountain bike use is predominant within the SRMA but the area is generally accessible to motorized use on designated motorized routes.
Visitor Services and Information	Information materials describe the SRMA and recreation opportunities. BLM staff/volunteers are periodically present at recreation sites but occasionally present away from recreation sites.
Management Controls and Regulations	Adequate but not overly restrictive level of visitor and land use restrictions initially in place to protect RSCs including winter closures for the benefit of wildlife. Restrictions and ethics are posted at trailheads. Directional signage is installed on trails.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

Proposed Action. Recreation Objective. Overall the Proposed Action will help achieve the SRMA recreation objective by enhancing mountain biking activity opportunities and foster the realization of the targeted outcomes. In addition, the development of a sustainable foot/bike loop trail system helps meet local demand. The Proposed Action will provide an improved "close to home" area that will allow frequent/easy access to outdoor non-motorized activities. The main recreation activities of biking, hiking and running on single-track trails will be enhanced. The

restoration the existing fall line route will make some portions of the management area more desirable to trail users seeking a more natural-looking trail.

RSCs. The Proposed Action is consistent with the desired physical, social and operational RSCs identified in Appendix F of the Colorado River Valley Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (BLM 2015). Physically, the existing level of naturalness will be maintained. The single-track trail system will be re-routed, expanded, maintained, and signed. Overall the physical RSCs will remain relatively constant. Socially, encounters will likely increase with a better trail built. Inappropriate recreation use will be rehabilitated. Directional signage will be installed on trails. Operationally mountain bike use will be predominant within the SRMA with no change in access for motorized recreation activities.

No Action Alternative. Recreation Objective. The visitor's realization of the targeted recreation activities and outcomes will not be improved under this alternative. None of the recreation enhancements described under the Proposed Action would be created.

RSCs. The existing physical, social and operational RSCs will not change. The existing fall line trail would continue to receive use but that use would likely drop as the trail deteriorates. The existing trespass and trail erosion concerns would also continue.

SOILS

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

A review of the soil survey by the NRCS for the *Aspen-Gypsum Area, Colorado, Parts of Eagle, Garfield, and Pitkin Counties* indicate two soil map units occur within the proposed project area (NRCS 1992). The NRCS soil map unit descriptions (NRCS 2015) are provided below:

Grotte gravelly loam (54) – This deep, well-drained soil is found on mountainsides at elevations ranging from 6,000 to 8,000 feet and on slopes of 25 to 65 percent. It is derived from alluvium and colluvium composed of sandstone. Surface runoff is rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate to severe.

Redrob loam (92) - is described as a deep, somewhat poorly drained soil derived from primarily sandstone and shale. This soil is typically found on alluvial valley floors, low terraces, and in flood plains with slopes of 1-6%. Runoff is slow and water erosion hazard is described as slight to moderate depending on the slope.

Soil health was evaluated in 2010 during the Roaring Fork Land Health Assessment. BLM staff concluded that soils were meeting land health standards throughout the proposed project area, with slight to moderate departures from expected conditions (BLM 2011).

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

Proposed Action. Trail building results in vegetation removal and soil surface compaction that may lead to elevated erosion rates. These impacts should be limited in scope due to the narrow linear feature of the trail for only 1.3 miles. In the long-term, there may be a benefit to soils by limiting recreational use on the steep and erosive trail and rehabilitating portions of the existing trail, to promote re-establishment of ground cover and minimize erosion.

No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, the trail would not be re-routed. The existing trail alignment would continue to be used regularly, resulting in further soil erosion impacts.

LAND HEALTH STANDARD 1 FOR SOILS.

Based on the Roaring Fork Land Health Assessment, BLM staff concluded that soils are meeting Standard 1 (BLM 2011). Implementation of the Proposed Action is not anticipated to degrade soil health from current conditions.

VISUAL RESOURCES

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

The proposed project area is located in an area classified as Visual Resource Management Class (VRM) Class II. The objective of VRM Class II is to retain the existing characteristic landscape. The level of change in any of the basic landscape elements (line, form, color, texture) due to management activities should be low and not evident. The area of the Proposed Action has a variety of landscape character types and varying degrees of alteration from human activities. The topography varies from steep foothills rising to steeper mountain peaks in the background. Numerous side drainages and gulches dissect the landforms adding to the variety and topographic texture. Vegetation consists of pinion juniper and sage brush plant communities. The surrounding landscape has been modified and already contains linear features such as buried utilities, roads, and dense subdivisions. The project area is along the Hwy 82 corridor.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

Proposed Action. The Proposed Action would not be visible from the Key Observation Point of Hwy 82 or the surrounding towns. The long term contrast rating process shows that with inclusion of design and mitigation measures no new contrast would be introduced or long term impacts. Therefore the Proposed Action meets the objective of VRM Class II in maintaining the existing landscape character.

No Action Alternative. The existing natural landscape would be maintained and VRM Class II objectives would be met.

WATER QUALITY

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

The proposed trail realignment lies within the Blue Creek-Roaring Fork River 6th level watershed. Within the project area, there are a few unnamed intermittent and ephemeral drainages that are tributary to the Roaring Fork River, which is approximately 1/3 mile away from the lower terminus of the proposed trail. These intermittent drainages likely only flow in response to snowmelt and summer rain storms. No water quality data are available for these drainages because they are generally dry. The State of Colorado has developed *Stream Classifications and Water Quality Standards* that identify beneficial uses of water and numeric standards used to determine allowable concentrations of water quality parameters (CDPHE 2014). The unnamed tributaries are listed under the Upper Colorado River Basin (Region 12) and have water use classifications described in Table 5.

Table 5. Stream Segment Description.

Stream Segment Description	Classifications
3c. Mainstem of the Roaring Fork River, from a point immediately below the confluence with the Fryingpan River, to the confluence with the Colorado River. Mainstem of Three Mile Creek, including all tributaries and wetlands, from the source to the confluence with the Roaring Fork River.	Aquatic Life Cold 1 Recreation E Water Supply Agriculture

Aquatic Life Cold 1 indicates that a stream segment is capable of sustaining a wide variety of cold water biota. Recreation E refers to stream segments in which surface waters are used for primary contact recreation. Water supply and agriculture refer to stream segments that are suitable or intended to become suitable for potable water supplies and suitable for irrigation or livestock use.

The State of Colorado has developed a *303(d) List of Impaired Waters* and *Monitoring and Evaluation List* (CDPHE 2012) that identifies stream segments that are not currently meeting water quality standards with technology based controls alone. No streams in the proposed project area are on this list suggesting water quality standards are currently being met.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

Proposed Action. Trail building results in vegetation removal and soil surface compaction that may lead to elevated erosion rates. If sediment reaches nearby water sources, higher turbidity can be expected and decrease water quality. However, design features included in the Proposed Action should minimize sediment transport to nearby water bodies. In addition, there may be a benefit to soils and water quality by rehabilitating steep portions of the existing trail and building a re-aligned trail that better contours with the topography.

No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, the trail would not be rerouted. The existing trail would be used regularly, resulting in continued soil erosion and transport that may impact water quality in the nearby water bodies.

LAND HEALTH STANDARD 5 FOR WATER QUALITY.

Based on the Roaring Fork Land Health Assessment, BLM staff concluded that water quality is meeting Standard 5 (BLM 2011). Implementation of the Proposed Action is not anticipated to degrade water quality from current conditions.

WILDLIFE: AQUATIC / FISHERIES

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

There are no fish bearing streams in the project area. The Roaring Fork River, which supports brook (*Salvelinus fontinalis*), brown *(Salmo trutta*), and rainbow (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) trout; mottled sculpin (*Cottus bairdii*); mountain whitefish (*Prosopium williamsoni*); and suckers (undetermined species), flows within approximately one third mile of the lower end of the proposed trail. No Federally listed, proposed, or candidate aquatic wildlife or BLM sensitive aquatic wildlife species are documented in the Roaring Fork River near the project area (USFWS 2015, BLM 2009).

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

Proposed Action. Trail construction could result in short term increases in soil erosion, but over the long term, there would be less erosion along the new trail than along the steeper existing trail. Partially reclaiming the existing route and closing it to public use would reduce soil erosion. The Proposed Action would curtail erosion into ephemeral streams that drain into the Roaring Fork River, reduce sedimentation in the watershed, and potentially improve conditions for aquatic wildlife.

No Action Alternative. Erosion would continue to occur along the existing route, and sedimentation in the watershed would remain the same.

LAND HEALTH STANDARDS 3 FOR AQUATIC WILDLIFE AND 4 FOR SPECIAL STATUS AQUATIC WILDLIFE.

There are no fish bearing streams in the Crown Common Allotment, so the Roaring Fork Land Health Assessment (BLM 2011) did not evaluate Land Health Standards 3 and 4 for aquatic wildlife. However, because over the long term the Proposed Action would reduce erosion and sedimentation in ephemeral streams draining into the Roaring Fork River, conditions for aquatic wildlife would potentially improve.

WILDLIFE: MIGRATORY BIRDS

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) provides protections to native birds, with the exception of certain upland fowl managed by state wildlife agencies for hunting. Within the context of the MBTA, migratory birds include non-migratory resident species as well as true migrants. For most migrant and resident species, nesting habitat is critical for supporting reproduction in terms of both nest sites and food. Also, because birds are generally territorial during the nesting season, their ability to access and utilize sufficient food is limited by the quality of the occupied territory. During non-breeding seasons, birds are generally non-territorial and able to feed across a larger area and wider range of habitats.

The project vicinity provides cover, forage, breeding, and/or nesting habitat for a variety of migratory birds that summer, winter, or migrate through the area. Migratory bird species that are federally listed and classified by the BLM as sensitive species are addressed in the Wildlife: Sensitive, Threatened, and Endangered Species section of this EA.

BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 2008-050 provides guidance toward meeting the BLM's responsibilities under the MBTA and the Executive Order 13186. The guidance directs Field Offices to promote the maintenance and improvement of habitat quantity and quality and to avoid, reduce or mitigate adverse impacts on the habitats of migratory bird species of conservation concern to the extent feasible, and in a manner consistent with regional or statewide bird conservation priorities.

The MBTA prohibits the "take" of a protected species. Under the Act, the term "take" means to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct. The USFWS interprets "harm" and "kill" to include loss of eggs or nestlings due to abandonment or reduced attentiveness by one or both adults as a result of disturbance by human activity, as well as physical destruction of an occupied nest.

The 1988 amendment to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act mandates the USFWS to "identify species, subspecies, and populations of all migratory nongame birds that, without additional conservation actions, are likely to become candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973." The *Birds of Conservation Concern 2008* (USFWS 2008) is the most recent effort to carry out this mandate. The CRVFO is within the Southern Rockies/Colorado Plateau Bird Conservation Region 16.

The project area includes the following plant communities and potentially associated migratory bird species.

Pinyon-juniper Woodlands. Pinyon and juniper trees provide food, cover and nest sites for numerous migratory birds. Species on the Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC) list that occur in the CRVFO and are associated with pinyon-juniper woodlands include the pinyon jay

(*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*), juniper titmouse (*Baeolophus ridgwayigra*) and Ferruginous Hawk *(Buteo regalis).* Other migratory species associated with this plant community within the CRVFO include the broad-tailed hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*), black-chinned hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*), Say's phoebe (*Sayornis saya*), ash-throated flycatcher *(Myiarchus cinerascens),* gray flycatcher (*Empidonax wrightii),* Townsend's solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*), American robin (*Turdus migratorius*), Western bluebird *(Sialia Mexicana),* mountain bluebird (*S. currucoides*), bushtit *(Psaltriparus minimus),* blue-gray gnatcatcher (*Polioptila caerulea*), plumbeous vireo (*Vireo plumbeus*), Western scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma californica*), Clarks's nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*), black-throated gray warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*), Virginia's warbler (*Oreothlypis virginiae*), chipping sparrow (*Spizella passerina*), lesser goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*) and house finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*). Winter visitors to pinyon-juniper habitats include the Cassin's finch (*Carpodacus cassinii*), a BCC species, which typically nests in montane and subalpine forests, though occasionally nests in pinyon-juniper woodlands.

Sagebrush Shrublands. Sagebrush and the associated native perennial grasses and forbs provide food, cover and nest sites for migratory birds. Sagebrush obligates that potentially occur in the CRVFO include the sagebrush sparrow (*Artemisiospiza nevadensis*), sage thrasher *(Oreoscoptes montanus)* and Brewer's sparrow (*Spizella breweri*), a BCC species. Other migratory species associated with sagebrush shrublands within the CRVFO include the western kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*), western meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*), green-tailed towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*), vesper sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*) and lark sparrow *(Chondestes grammacus).* Some species are associated with both pinyon-juniper woodlands and sagebrush shrublands, including the Say's phoebe and gray flycatcher.

Mixed Mountain Shrublands. The vegetation of mixed mountain shrublands varies substantially depending on elevation, slope, aspect, and soil. More mesic (moist) sites such as on north-facing slopes and along minor drainages are typically dominated by Gambel's oak and serviceberry, while more xeric (dry) sites such as south-facing slopes are typically dominated by mountain-mahogany, bitterbrush, snowberry, and sagebrush. The dense cover, tall height, and abundant acorns and berries of mesic oak-serviceberry stands provide cover, forage, and nesting habitat for numerous species including spotted towhees (*Pipilo maculatus*), Virginia's warblers (*Oreothlypis virginiae*), black-headed grosbeaks (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*), black-billed magpies (*Pica hudsonia*), broad-tailed hummingbirds (*Selasphorus platycercus*), green-tailed towhees (*Pipilo chlorurus*), mourning doves (*Zenaida macroura*), Western scrub-jays (*Aphelocoma californica*) and lazuli buntings (*Passerina amoena*).

Raptors. Many raptors forage over wide areas, so even if they aren't known to nest in a specific area, they may still fly over searching for food. Raptors on the BCC list that occur in portions of the CRVO include the golden eagle *(Aquila chrysaetos),* Bald Eagle *(Haliaeetus leucocephalus),* Ferruginous Hawk *(Buteo regalis),* prairie falcon *(Falco mexicanus),* peregrine falcon *(F. peregrinus)* and flammulated owl *(Psiloscops flammeolus).* Prairie falcons nest on rocky ledges and cliffs and hunt in grasslands and semi-desert shrublands. Peregine falcons hunt near nest sites and along rivers and lakes, but can be found in nearly any open vegetation community

during migration and winter. Flammulated owls typically nest in ponderosa pine and aspen forests, but have been found nesting in mixed forests, and reportedly use old-growth pinyon-juniper woodlands.

A variety of raptors not on the BCC list are known to occur in the CRVO including the American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), long-eared owl (*Asio otus*), great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), northern pygmy owl (*Glaucidium gnoma*) and northern saw-whet owl (*Aegolius acadius*). The northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), a BLM sensitive species, is an occasional winter visitor to pinyon-juniper woodlands from its nesting habitat in montane and subalpine forests.

Environmental Consequences.

Proposed Action. Because trail construction and reclamation would be conducted outside of the nesting season (May 15 to July 15), breeding birds of conservation concern will not be impacted. Any migratory birds potentially using the area during project implementation would be expected to disperse to similar vegetation in the project vicinity. Any disturbances resulting from trail construction and reclamation work including noise, human presence, and equipment would be short-term. Due to the small amount of vegetation that would be lost, abundance of similar vegetation in the project vicinity, and ability of many birds to habituate to localized disturbances, the Proposed Action is not expected to impact migratory bird populations over the long term on a landscape level.

No Action Alternative. New trail construction would not occur, and the existing route would not be partially reclaimed and closed to public use. Vegetation would not be removed, and disturbances from noise, human presence, and equipment associated with trail work would not temporarily displace migratory birds. Human use would remain high along the existing route. Localized human disturbances along the proposed new trail would not occur.

Land Health Standards 3 for Migratory Birds and 4 for Special Status Migratory Birds.

Based on the Roaring Fork Land Health Assessment (BLM 2011), Land Health Standards 3 and 4 were being achieved for terrestrial wildlife species in the Crown Common Allotment. Impacts associated with the Proposed Action would not affect migratory bird populations, and the Proposed Action would not diminish the achievement of this standard for migratory birds and raptors.

Wildlife: Sensitive, Threatened, and Endangered

Affected Environment.

Table 6 summarizes Federally listed, proposed and candidate terrestrial wildlife species potentially occurring in Eagle County (USFWS 2015) and species on the Colorado BLM State Director's Sensitive Species List (BLM 2009) that may occur in the project area.

Table 6. Special Status Terrestrial Wildlife Species in Eagle County.

Federally Listed, Proposed, or Candidate Terrestrial Wildlife Species		
Species and Status	**Habitat/Range Summaries**	**Occurrence/ Potentially Impacted**
Canada lynx (*Lynx Canadensis)* Threatened	Canada lynx occupy high-latitude or high-elevation coniferous forests characterized by cold, snowy winters and an adequate prey base. In the western US, lynx are associated with mesic forests of lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, and quaking aspen in the upper montane and subalpine zones, generally between 8,000 and 12,000 feet in elevation. Although snowshoe hares (*Lepus americanus*) are the preferred prey, lynx also feed on mountain cottontails (*Sylvilagus nuttallii*), pine squirrels (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*), and blue grouse (*Dendragapus obscurus*). The Forest Service has mapped suitable denning, winter, and other habitat for lynx within the White River and Routt National Forests. The mapped suitable habitat comprises areas known as Lynx Analysis Units (LAUs) that are the approximate size of a female's home range. Several LAUs include small parcels of BLM lands. There are no LAUs or mapped lynx linkage areas in the project area.	Absent/No
Mexican spotted owl *(Strix occidentalis lucida)* Threatened	This owl nests, roosts, and hunts in mature coniferous forests in canyons and foothills. The key habitat components are old-growth forests with uneven-age stands, high canopy closure, high tree density, fallen logs and snags. The only extant populations in Colorado are in the Pikes Peak and Wet Mountain areas of south-central Colorado and the Mesa Verde area of southwestern Colorado.	Absent/No
Greater Sage-grouse *(Centrocercus urophasianus)* Candidate	Sage-grouse are found only in areas where sagebrush is abundant, providing both food and cover. Sage-grouse prefer relatively open sagebrush flats or rolling sagebrush hills. Within the CRVFO, sage-grouse are present in the northeast part of the Field Office in the Northern Eagle/Southern Routt population. While small (<500 birds), this population probably has, or had, a relationship with the larger population in Moffat, Rio Blanco and western Routt counties, and probably with the Middle Park population to the east. There is no preliminary priority or preliminary general habitat mapped in the project area.	Absent/No
Yellow-billed cuckoo *(Coccyzus americanus)* Threatened	This secretive species occurs in mature riparian forests of cottonwoods and other large deciduous trees with a well-developed understory of tall riparian shrubs. Western cuckoos breed in large blocks of riparian habitats, particularly woodlands with cottonwoods (*Populus fremontii*) and willows (*Salix* sp.). A few sightings of yellow-billed cuckoo have occurred in western Colorado along the Colorado River near Grand Junction. There is no proposed critical habitat in the Colorado River Valley Field Office.	Absent/No

Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly *(Boloria acrocnema)* Endangered	The butterfly has been verified at only two areas in the San Juan Mountains in Colorado. There is anecdotal evidence of other colonies in the San Juans and southern Sawatch ranges in Colorado. The butterfly exists above treeline on north and east facing slopes in patches of its larval host plant, snow willow. The greatest threat is butterfly collecting. Climatological patterns, disease, parasitism, predation, and trampling of larvae by humans and livestock pose additional threats.	Absent/No
Colorado BLM Sensitive Terrestrial Wildlife Species Present or Potentially Present in the Project Area		
Species	**Habitat/Range Summaries**	**Occurrence/ Potentially Impacted**
Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*) Fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes)*	Occurs as scattered populations at moderate elevations on the western slope of Colorado. Habitat associations are not well defined. Both bats will forage for aerial insects over pinyon-juniper, montane conifer and semi-desert shrubland communities. Roosts in caves, rock crevices, mines, buildings and tree cavities. Both species are widely distributed and usually occur in small groups. Townsend's big-eared bats are not abundant anywhere in its range due to patchy distribution and limited availability of suitable roosting. No roosts or hibernaculum are documented in the project area.	Possible/No
White-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys leucurus*)	Occurs in western Colorado, typically in desert grasslands and shrub grasslands between 5,000-10,000 feet in elevation.	Absent/No
Northern goshawk (*Accipter gentilis)*	Montane and subalpine coniferous forests and aspen forests; may move to lower elevation pinyon-juniper woodlands in search of prey during winter. Preys on small-medium sized birds and mammals. Breeds in coniferous deciduous and mixed forests. Nests are typically located on a northerly aspect in a drainage or canyon and are often near a stream. Nest areas contain one or more stands of large, old trees with a dense canopy cover. A goshawk pair occupies its nest area from March until late September. The nest area is the center of all movements and behaviors associated with breeding from courtship through fledging.	Possible in Winter/No
Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*)	Open, rolling and/or rugged terrain in grasslands and shrubsteppe communities; also grasslands and cultivated fields; nests on cliffs and rocky outcrops. Fall/ winter resident, non-breeding.	Possible in Winter/No
Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)	Nesting/Roosting: mature cottonwood forests along rivers. Foraging: fish and waterfowl along rivers and lakes; may feed on carrion, rabbits and other foods in winter.	Possible/No
American Peregrine Falcon *(Falco peregrines anatum)*	Rare spring and fall migrant in western valleys. Peregrine falcons inhabit open spaces associated with high cliffs and bluffs overlooking rivers. The falcon nests on high cliffs and forages over nearby woodlands.	Possible/No
Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus)*	See Federally Listed, Proposed or Candidate Terrestrial Wildlife Species portion of table.	Absent/No
Brewer's sparrow (*Spizella berweri*)	Summers in western Colorado mountain parks and is a spring/fall migrant at lower elevations. Sagebrush obligate with an apparently secure conservation status in Colorado. Primary habitat is mature big sagebrush 1.6-3 ft. tall with low to moderate canopy cover, and habitat patches ≥15 acres. Mesic sites, particularly riparian areas within sagebrush habitats, are also an important primary habitat component.	Possible/No

White-faced ibis (*Plegadis chihi)*	Primarily inhabits freshwater wetlands, especially cattail (*Typha* spp.) and bulrush (*Scirpus* spp.) marshes. Rare, non-breeding, summer migrant to western Colorado valleys and mountain lakes. Feeds in flooded hay meadows, agricultural fields, and estuarine wetlands. Breeds in isolated colonies in mainly shallow marshes with "islands" of emergent vegetation.	Absent/No
Midget faded rattlesnake *(Crotalus viridis concolor)*	Found in northwestern Colorado, including western Garfield County. Sagebrush communities with an abundance of south-facing rock outcroppings and exposed canyon walls. Rocky outcrops are essential for cover, variable thermal conditions and hibernation.	Absent/No
Utah milk snake *(Lampropeltis triangulum taylori)*	In Colorado, milk snakes occur in shortgrass prairie, sandhills, shrubby hillsides, canyons and open stands of ponderosa pine in the foothills, pinyon-juniper woodlands, and arid river valleys. *L. triangulum taylori* occurs in west-central Colorado below 6,000 feet elevation.	Absent/No

Due to the absence of critical habitat, occupied habitat, or known occurrences of any Federally listed, proposed, or candidate terrestrial wildlife species in the project area, the Proposed Action would have "No Effect" on listed terrestrial wildlife.

Special Status Raptors. Bald eagles were removed from the federal threatened and endangered species list in 2007, but are still protected under the MBTA and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and are currently listed as a BLM sensitive species. The project area overlaps with bald eagle winter range and winter forage range as mapped by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW). Roost sites and a nest site are mapped along the Roaring Fork River within approximately two miles of the project area. There is no riparian vegetation in the project area. The project area does not provide nesting habitat for special status raptors.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

Proposed Action.

Special Status Bats. Roosting habitat for special status bats in cliffs, rock crevices, or abandoned mines would not be affected. Vegetation loss would be minimal and would not have a measurable effect on insect populations.

Special Status Raptors. Any special status raptors in the area would be foraging over large expanses of upland vegetation and could avoid the project area during project implementation or when recreationists would be using the trail.

Brewer's Sparrow. If this species uses sagebrush in the project area, birds could be temporarily displaced due to noise, human presence, and equipment during trail construction. Breeding would not be impacted due to mitigation (see Wildlife: Migratory Birds). Vegetation removal would be unlikely to impact use of the area by this species. Human use of the trail would not be expected to impact Brewer's sparrow populations.

No Action Alternative. The trail would not be rerouted, so vegetation would not be removed and wildlife would not be temporarily displaced due to noise, human presence, and equipment. Human use of the proposed trail would not potentially displace special status species in the project area.

LAND HEALTH STANDARD 4 FOR SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES.

Based on the Roaring Fork Land Health Assessment (BLM 2011), suitable habitat and connectivity of habitats was available for BLM special status terrestrial wildlife species. Although the Proposed Action would create a new trail, the existing trail would be partially reclaimed and closed to public mechanized and motorized use. Soil stability should improve along the existing trail, and recreational use would be moved to a more sustainable trail. Land Health Standard 4 would continue to be achieved under the Proposed Action.

WILDLIFE: TERRESTRIAL

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

Diverse plant communities across the CRVFO support a variety of terrestrial wildlife that summer, winter, or migrate through the area. Wildlife need to move across the landscape for food, cover and in response to seasonal conditions. Human development and activities have fragmented habitat, and in some cases, created barriers to wildlife movement. Factors contributing to wildlife disturbance or degradation and fragmentation of habitat include power lines, pipelines, fences, public recreation use, residential and commercial development, vegetation treatments, livestock and wild ungulate grazing, oil and gas development, fire suppression, roads and trails.

Big Game. Mule deer *(Odocoileus hemionus)* and Rocky Mountain elk *(Cervus elaphus nelsonii)* are recreationally important species that occur in the project area. BLM managed lands provide a large portion of the undeveloped habitat for big game in Colorado. Mule deer and elk typically occupy higher elevation, forested areas during summer and migrate to lower elevation sagebrush-dominated ridges and south-facing slopes during winter. CPW maintains maps of habitat for big game and other wildlife species. The project area overlaps with mapped elk winter range and winter concentration areas as well as mule deer summer, winter, severe winter, and winter concentration areas. Winter range is often considered the most limiting habitat type for mule deer and elk, so effective management of these areas is particularly important to the health of populations.

Other Mammals. Numerous small mammals could reside within the planning area, including mice (*Peromyscus* spp.), woodrats (*Neotoma* spp.), ground squirrels *(Spermophilus* spp.*)*, chipmunks (*Neotamias* spp.), rabbits *(Sylvilagus* spp.), skunks *(Mephitis mephitis)*, raccoons *(Procyon lotor)* and porcupines (*Erethizon dorsatum*). Many of these mammals are prey for raptors and larger carnivores. Larger carnivores expected to occur include bobcats (*Lynx rufus*)

and coyotes (*Canis latrans*). CPW has mapped the entire project area as mountain lion (*Felis concolor*) and black bear (*Ursus americanus*) habitat as well as a black bear fall concentration area. Mountain lions are most likely to be in the vicinity when mule deer are present. Bats documented in Northwest Colorado that could occur in the CRVFO that are not on the BLM special status species list include pallid bats (*Antrozous pallidus*), big brown bats (*Eptesicus fuscus*), spotted bats (*Euderma maculatum*), silver-haired bats (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*), hoary bats (*Lasiurus cinereus*), California myotis (*Myotis californicus*), Western small-footed myotis (*M. ciliolabrum*), long-eared myotis (*M. evotis*), little brown myotis (*M. lucifugus*), long-legged myotis (*Myotis volans*), Yuma myotis (*M. yumanensis*), big free-tailed bats (*Nyctinomops macrotis*), canyon bats (*Parastrellus hesperus*), and Brazilian free-tailed bats (*Tadarida brasiliensis*).

Gallinaceous Birds. Game birds that may be found in the project area include dusky grouse (*Dendragapus obscurus*), ring-necked pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) and wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*). The project area is mapped as turkey overall range, but not as a production area, roost site, winter range or winter concentration area.

Waterfowl. There are no rivers, perennial streams, reservoirs, or ponds in the project area.

Reptiles. Reptile species most likely to occur in the project area include sagebrush lizards (*Sceloporus graciosus*), prairie and plateau lizards *(S. undulatus)*, tree lizards *(Urosaurus ornatus)*, gopher snakes or bullsnakes (*Pituophis catenifer*), and western terrestrial garter snakes (*Thamnophis elegans*). Gopher snakes can be found throughout Colorado in most plant communities, including riparian areas, semidesert and mountain shrublands, pinyon-juniper woodlands, and ponderosa pine and other montane woodlands. Western terrestrial garter snakes occur throughout most of western Colorado, usually below 11,000 feet. Smooth green snakes (*Opheodrys vernalis*) can be present in riparian areas, but in western Colorado, may also be common in mountain shrublands far from water (Hammerson 1999).

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

Proposed Action. Terrestrial wildlife could be temporarily displaced by the noise, human presence, and equipment associated with trail construction and reclamation, but these impacts would be minimal and short-term. Work would not be conducted during winter when mule deer and elk concentrate in the area. Due to the small amount of vegetation that would be lost and abundance of similar vegetation in the project vicinity, habitat loss would be minimal and would not impact wildlife populations.

Terrestrial wildlife can be displaced by and avoid recreational trails. Because public non-motorized use would move from the existing trail to the new trail, any displacement and avoidance should be comparable. The new trail would be closed to mechanized travel from December 1 through April 15 to protect wintering wildlife. Soil stability should improve along the existing trail, and recreational use would be moved to a more sustainable trail.

No Action Alternative. The trail would not be rerouted, so vegetation would not be removed and wildlife would not be temporarily displaced due to noise, human presence, and equipment. Any displacement and avoidance of wildlife resulting from the current trail would remain the same, and there would be no new impacts to wildlife along the proposed trail. Soil stability would not be improved along the existing trail.

LAND HEALTH STANDARD 3 FOR HEALTHY ANIMAL COMMUNITIES.

Based on the Roaring Fork Land Health Assessment (BLM 2011), Land Health Standard 3 was being achieved on the Crown Common Allotment, and no site specific issues were reported. Although the Proposed Action would create a new trail, the existing trail would be partially reclaimed and closed to public mechanized and motorized use. The proposed trail would be closed to mechanized travel from December 1 through April 15 to minimize impacts to wintering wildlife. Soil stability should improve along the existing trail, and recreational use would be moved to a more sustainable trail. Land Health Standard 3 would continue to be achieved under the Proposed Action.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS.

Cumulative effects are the incremental effects caused by management actions considering all other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions affecting a resource. These can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taken over time and the effects can be either additive or subtract from the effects of other actions.

Soil and Water. Cumulative impacts to soil and water resources can occur from existing roads and trails throughout the project area. Roads and trails can contribute to increased surface runoff and accelerated erosion, especially where proper drainage is lacking. Other impacts such as livestock grazing, vegetation treatments or weed treatments may also change water infiltration or runoff rates and affect soil and water resources. Based on limited land management activities occurring throughout the project area, it is assumed that cumulative effects to soil and water are minor if proper best management practices are implemented.

Wildlife, Including Special Status Species. The area covered by the Proposed Action only comprises a small portion of the watershed. Many other land use activities (e.g., recreation, housing, road maintenance, livestock grazing) occur within the watershed. All of these activities have altered the amount of suitable and potentially suitable habitats for terrestrial wildlife species. Cumulatively, many of the future actions planned on private and other lands may have some undetermined effect on wildlife including special status species habitat. The Proposed Action would create negligible landscape-level cumulative impacts to wildlife when viewed in comparison with those activities currently occurring and reasonably certain to occur on adjacent private/other lands.

TRIBES, INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, OR AGENCIES CONSULTED.

The CRVFO consulted with the following:

- Brett Meredith, from the trails department of Roaring Fork Transit Authority (RFTA) was contacted on October 10, 2014.

- Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association

LIST OF PREPARERS.

Members of the CRVFO interdisciplinary team who participated in the impact analysis of the Proposed Action and alternatives, development of appropriate mitigation measures, and preparation of this EA are listed in Table 6, along with their areas of responsibility.

Table 7. BLM Interdisciplinary Team Authors and Reviewers.

Name	Title	Areas of Participation
Isaac Pittman	Rangeland Management Specialist	Range
Carla DeYoung	Ecologist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern; Vegetation; T/E/S Plants; Wetlands & Riparian Zones, Land Heath Standards
Greg Wolfgang	Outdoor Recreation Planner	NEPA Lead, Recreation, VRM, Travel Management
Kimberly Leitzinger	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, Recreation
Erin Leifeld	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources and Native American Concerns
Hilary Boyd	Wildlife Biologist	Aquatic Wildlife and T/E/S, Migratory Birds, Terrestrial Wildlife and T/E/S
Pauline Adams	Hydrologist	Air Quality, Water Quality, Soils, Geology
Kristy Wallner	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species (Noxious Weeds)
Brian Hopkins	Assistant Field Manager	NEPA Compliance

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
COLORADO RIVER VALLEY FIELD OFFICE
SILT, COLORADO

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

DOI-BLM-CO-N040-2015-0009-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT.

I have reviewed the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the Proposed Action documented in the EA. The effects of the Proposed Action are disclosed in the environmental consequences sections of the EA. Implementing regulations for NEPA (40 CFR 1508.27) provide criteria for determining the significance of the effects. Significant, as used in NEPA, requires consideration of both context and intensity.

Based upon the review of the test for significance and the environmental analyses conducted, I have determined that the actions analyzed in the EA will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, I have determined that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary for this proposal.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZING OFFICIAL.

B R Hopkins

Brian R. Hopkins
Assistant Field Manager
Colorado River Valley Field Office

7-29-15

Date

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
COLORADO RIVER VALLEY FIELD OFFICE
SILT, COLORADO

DECISION RECORD

DOI-BLM-CO-N040-2015-0009-EA

DECISION.

It is my decision to authorize the Proposed Action as described in Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-CO-N040-2015-0009-EA. This decision will result in the construction and maintenance of a trail for non-motorized recreation activities.

RATIONALE.

The Proposed Action will contribute to achieving Approved Resource Management Plan recreation objectives for The Crown SRMA by enhancing close to town recreation opportunities for non-motorized recreation activities. It will help meet growing local demands for mountain biking and other non-motorized activity opportunities. A planned and designed trail will reduce soil loss and erosion in the area. A re-routed trail will also reduce trespassing off of BLM lands onto private lands.

MITIGATION MEASURES.

Cultural Resources. If subsurface cultural values are uncovered during operations, all work in the vicinity of the resource will cease and the authorized officer with the BLM notified immediately. The operator shall take any additional measures requested by the BLM to protect discoveries until they can be adequately evaluated by the permitted archaeologist. Within 48 hours of the discovery, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and consulting parties will be notified of the discovery and consultation will begin to determine an appropriate mitigation measure. BLM in cooperation with the operator will ensure that the discovery is protected from further disturbance until mitigation is completed. Operations may resume at the discovery site upon receipt of written instructions and authorization by the authorized officer.

Native American Human Remains. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the holder must notify the authorized officer, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony on federal land. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (c) and (d), the holder must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery that could adversely affect the discovery. The holder shall make a reasonable effort to protect the human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony for a period of thirty days after written notice is provided to the authorized officer, or until the authorized officer has issued a written notice to proceed, whichever occurs first.

Weeds. The trail will be monitored for noxious weeds. If monitoring indicates weeds are present, then spraying and reseeding with a native seed mix will be used to treat weed infestations.

APPEALS.

All of the documents supporting this decision are available for the review by the public. Appeal procedures for this decision are outlined in Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 4. In accordance with Title 43 CFR 4.410 any party to a case who is adversely affected by the decision of an officer of the Bureau of Land Management shall have a right to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (Board). The Notice of Appeal must be filed in the Bureau of Land Management office that issued the decision within 30 days after the date of service (43 CFR 4.411). Procedures for filing an appeal are described on BLM Form 1842-1 (September 2006).

NAME OF PREPARER. Gregory Wolfgang, Outdoor Recreation Planner.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZING OFFICIAL.

B R Hopkins

Brian R. Hopkins
Assistant Field Manager
Colorado River Valley Field Office

7-29-15

Date